Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

Editor: Michael P Birks, Flixton Girls' School, Urmston, Manchester M31 3DR, England 061-747 5924 (Home)

Vol.III, No.47 April 1992

S Main Packet Sec: Brian Sylvester, 3 Russel Court, St Lukes Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7AP

Group leader: Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, Redhill, Surrey RH1 4PL 0883 742186

Group treasurer : Colin Eddleston, 19 Sion Hill, BATH BA1 2UJ 0225 315608

CENTRAL AMERICA GROUP MEETING

Our Group organised and hosted a well attended meeting of the Spanish Main P.S. in the Victory Services Club, London, on Saturday 1st February. In many ways this was an experiment. In previous meetings we have usually devised programmes comprised of a series of short but invariably very specialised displays by individual members, the only common theme being that they would be related to the philately of Central America. It was thought that perhaps such specialised displays might be of limited appeal, especially to our newest members who might in fact feel intimidated by too many high-powered displays. Of course, we are by definition a very specialised Group and we should always cater for such refined interests, but at the same time we ought to be educating and entertaining each other.

Sometimes with highly specialised displays one tends to assume that certain basic facts about which the speaker is constructing his or her display are widely known, whereas the opposite may be the case, such that the display either goes over the heads of the audience or the message that is being conveyed will not be understood.

In order to try and address this problem we have decided at our Group Meetings to invite one of our members to give a comprehensive display of the basic philately of his chosen Republic - exactly the sort of display one would give if aksed to put on an evening's display at a local philatelic society. The rest of the day's programme could then be devoted to the short highly specialised dislpays that we have become accustomed to seeing. Hopefully a happy medium can be struck and everyone will find something of interest at our meetings.

For this first meeting, we were pleased to have our Editor, Michael Birks, come up from Manchester to give what turned out to be his one hundredth philatelic display; the stamps and postal history of Nicaragua. Every one present was highly entertained by Mike's witty and polished performance and we all came away knowing a lot more about both the philately and the social and political stories behind the material shown. What is certain is that Mike's act will be a hard one to follow.

Nicaragua was the main thrust of the meeting and Mike's display was complemented by a succinct and thought-provoking study of the Nicaraguan Seebeck issues by John Fosbery. The balance of the day was given over to aerophilatelic matters - a comprehensive display of judiciously chosen Mexican first flight covers by Mario Riosa, and Costa Rican international airmail rates following the introduction of regular services in 1930, by Richard Saundry.

It will be interesting to see if this experimental format for our meetings can be sustained. We are always seeking new ideas. If any one has any comments would they please forward them to the Editor or myself. In addition I trust that in succeeding meetings we will be able to find volunteers to give displays of their Republics. Anybody out there willing to show us Guatemala, or Salvador or Mexico?

rhs

THE RAILWAYS OF COSTA RICA by DR ANTHONY GOODBODY

Introduction

Costa Rica is the least populous and second smallest of the Central American republics. Extending across the isthmus from the Pacific to the Caribbean, it is bounded on the north by Nicaragua and on the south by Panama. The country achieved independence from Spain in 1822 since which time it has been one of the more stable of the Latin American republics.

In spite of its name (meaning "Rich Coast"), Costa Rica has no mineral deposits of importance. Coffee growing is the main industry and the chief source of energy is hydro-electricity.

Few parts of the South American continent are covered adequately in the railway literature, but the space devoted to the railways of Costa Rica is approximately zero. Apart from the private railways owned by the fruit companies, there are 117 route miles of 3 ft 6 in gauge track formerly owned by the Costa Rica Railway Company, and a further 79 route miles formerly owned by the Ferrocarril Electrico al Pacifico. In 1977 the two lines were merged into the Ferrocarriles de Costa Rica SA (FECOSA).

Definitive Issue, 1901 (SG 48)

The Birris Bridge on the San Jose - Limon railway (Costa Rica Railway Company), over the Reventazon River. This is a scarce stamp mint or used. The majority of "used" copies are remainders cancelled with with five black bars or originals used for telegraphic purposes and cancelled with four concentric circles.

50th Anniversary of the San Jose - Puntarenas Railway (The Pacific Line), 1947 (SG 461)

The first railway to be built in Costa Rica connected the Capital, San Jose, with the Pacific port of Puntarenas, a distance of seventy-two miles. Built to the 3 ft 6 in guage, it was begun in 1897 and completed in 1911. It was a difficult railway to build, the constructors having been faced with swamps in the costal region and mountains further inland. As a result it featured curves of 150 ft radius and gradients of 1 in 40. Some time in the 1920's it became obvious that steam power could not cope with the ever increasing traffic, and a decision was taken to electrify the line. Conversion was completed in 1929 and the line was supplied with eight A1A+A1A, 15,000 volt a.c. electric locomotives from A.E.G. in Germany. At the same time the name of the railway became the Ferrocarril Electrico al Pacifico.

The locomotive is the 2-4-0 "Maria Cecilia". It is said to have been the first locomotive to run in Costa Rica. It is depicted on the stamp as now preserved, with the legend "F.E. al P." on the tender.

Centenary of the Birth of President Oreamuno (SG 570, 574)

The 20c value shows the railway at Puntarenas, while the 1 colon stamp features the Bo-Bo electric locomotive N^{O}31. It is one of a series of four locomotives (N^{OS} 30-33) built in 1956 by Henschel & Sohn of Kassel with electrical parts by Siemens. Weight 60 tons, power rating 1100 kw.

Stamp Centenary, 1963 (SG 669)

150th Anniversary of the Birth of Heinrich von Stephan, 1981 (SG 1225)

Mail car drawn by a burro (a kind of a donkey)

In Praise of Progress, 1980 (SG 1206)

Railway bridge over the Rio Frio (Cold River). The 106 km 3 ft 6 in gauge line, the so-called "Banana Line" from Limon to Rio Frio in the north, was electrified in 1982.

In Praise of Progress, 1982 (SG 1272)

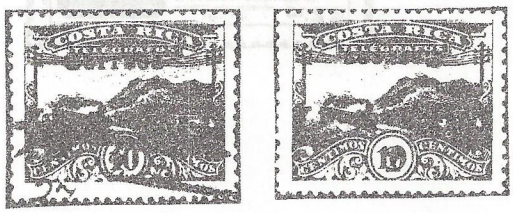
Electrification of the Atlantic Railway. The first concession for a line from Limon to San Jose and Alajuela was given to the Atlantic Railway Co in 1871. The line became known as the Costa Rica Railway Company Ltd, registered in London, in 1884. Construction was completed in 1890. The railway was nationalised in 1972 and in 1977 the Atlantic and Pacific lines were merged into Ferrocarriles de Costa Rica SA (FECOSA).

The Telegraph Stamps of 1907 and 1927

In 1907 a set of telegraph stamps was issued. A single design was used for all eight values and it showed a steam train running through mountainous scenary. A further set, of six values. appeared in 1927. Many of the values were overprinted for postal purposes from 1911 onwards (SG 102 etc). Some of the overprints are known inverted or partially inverted. Some of the 1911 overprints, including all the errors, have been the subject of forgeries. The remainder of this article will be devoted to the setting out of a few empirical rules for recognising these forgeries. I cannot claim to be an expert on this subject and I have only examined a limited number of stamps. If any reader can modify the conclusions I have reached I hope he will write to the editor.

In the first place, any overprinted stamp with a telegraphic cancel (concentric circles) is certain to be a forgery because the overprinting would have been done after the stamp had been used.

The second useful rule is that, apart from errors, the only surcharged value known to have been forged in the 2c on 10c blue. This particular surcharge (which is in red) is, however, more difficult to determine than the others (which are all black), so I will deal with the easier ones first.



genuine surcharges

forged surcharges

Suppose we have a black surcharge which we suspect is a forgery. It will, of necessity, be some kind of error. The first thing to do is to examine the shape of the "D" of "Dos Centimos". The forgery is rather more "gothic" than the genuine; the vertical stroke tapering to a point at its upper end. The second clue is provided by the length of the words "Dos Centimos". This is 19·5mm (for the perf 14 stamps) or 20·0mm (for the perf 14 x 11·5 stamps) in the genuine stamp, and 20·5mm in the forgery.

Finally we come to the 2c on 10c red overprint. This is a scarce stamp and the straight overprints have been forged as well as the errors. Here again, the length of the words "Dos Centimos" is slightly more for the forgeries than for the genuine stamps, but there is barely 0·5mm difference so the test is hard to apply. Also there is little or no difference in the shape of the "D" and such difference as there is, is hard to determine because forged red overprints are generally more

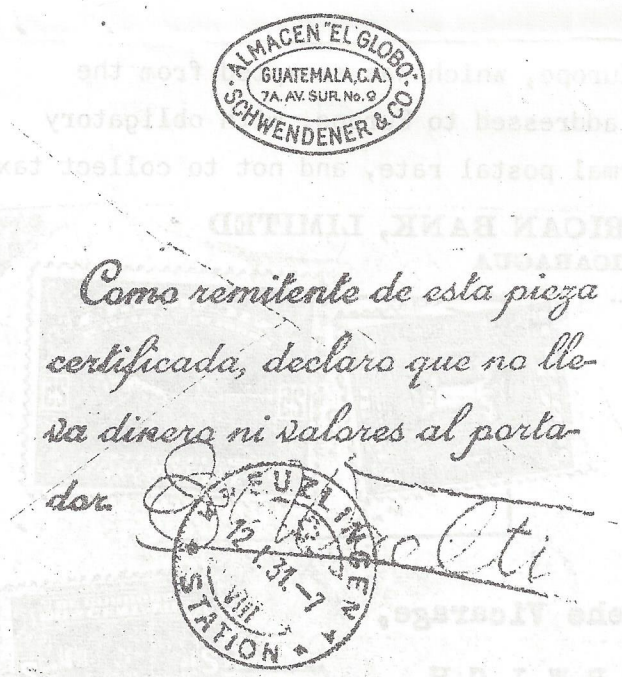
fuzzy than the genuine. A good test, which works for upright overprints as well as for completely inverted overprints (and is valid for black as well as for red overprints), is to place a straight edge vertically to the right of the numeral "2". On the genuine stamp one will see the "n" of "centimos" and the second "r" of "correos" just about touching the straight edge. On the forged stamps this is likely to be far from the case. The test is, of course, no use for determining stamps for which (say) only the word "correos" is inverted.

The Author

Tony Goodbody is known world wide though his contributions to "Railway Philately" published by the Railway Philatelic Group. His series of "Railways on Stamps" was published in connection with C A Hart, by Picton Publishing who went out of business before the parts dealing with S and C America were published. We are fortunate that these parts will appear in our Newsletter, Chile News and the Mainsheet over the coming issues. The earlier parts, 1&2 (E Europe), 3-5 (W. Europe) and 6-8 (Africa) are still available at £2 each plus 40p p&p from the author at 79 Forest Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside L43 1UH.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

NICARAGUA: MISCELLANEOUS Issue 43, April 1991.


ALMACEN EL GLOBO
GUATEMALA, C.A.
7A. AV. SUR No. 9
SCHWENDENER & CO.
Como remitente de esta pieza certificada, declaro que no lleva dinero ni valores al portador.
STATION

Cecile Gruson writes:-

"I enclose a xerox of the reverse of a 1930 Guatemala cover with a cachet similar to that described by Derek Pocock under "3". In Guatemala this was an official PO Cachet applied on registration and signed by the sender. Ever since Central America became independent, postal laws prohibited the inclusion of cash or valuables in mail for obvious security reasons. The earliest of these laws, dated 1824, which applied to all of the Central American Federation, applied to Nicaragua. It is likely that this ruling also stayed in force in Nicaragua, as it has for Guatemala."

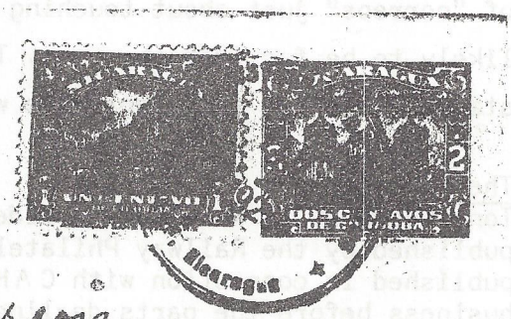
COSTA RICA: A new discovery.

Michael Round reports the discovery of a horizontal pair of SG 1116 (1978, 500th Birth Anniversary of Oviedo, the 85c value) imperforate between. His example is postally used, but the cancellation is not decipherable. Has any other example been discovered?

NICARAGUA: THE 'R DE C' STAMPS by D N KILNER

(Continued from the previous issue)

Similarly with this 2c postal stationery envelope to the USA, postmarked 16.2.25, the tax has been collected with a 1c definitive stamp.



Mrs.

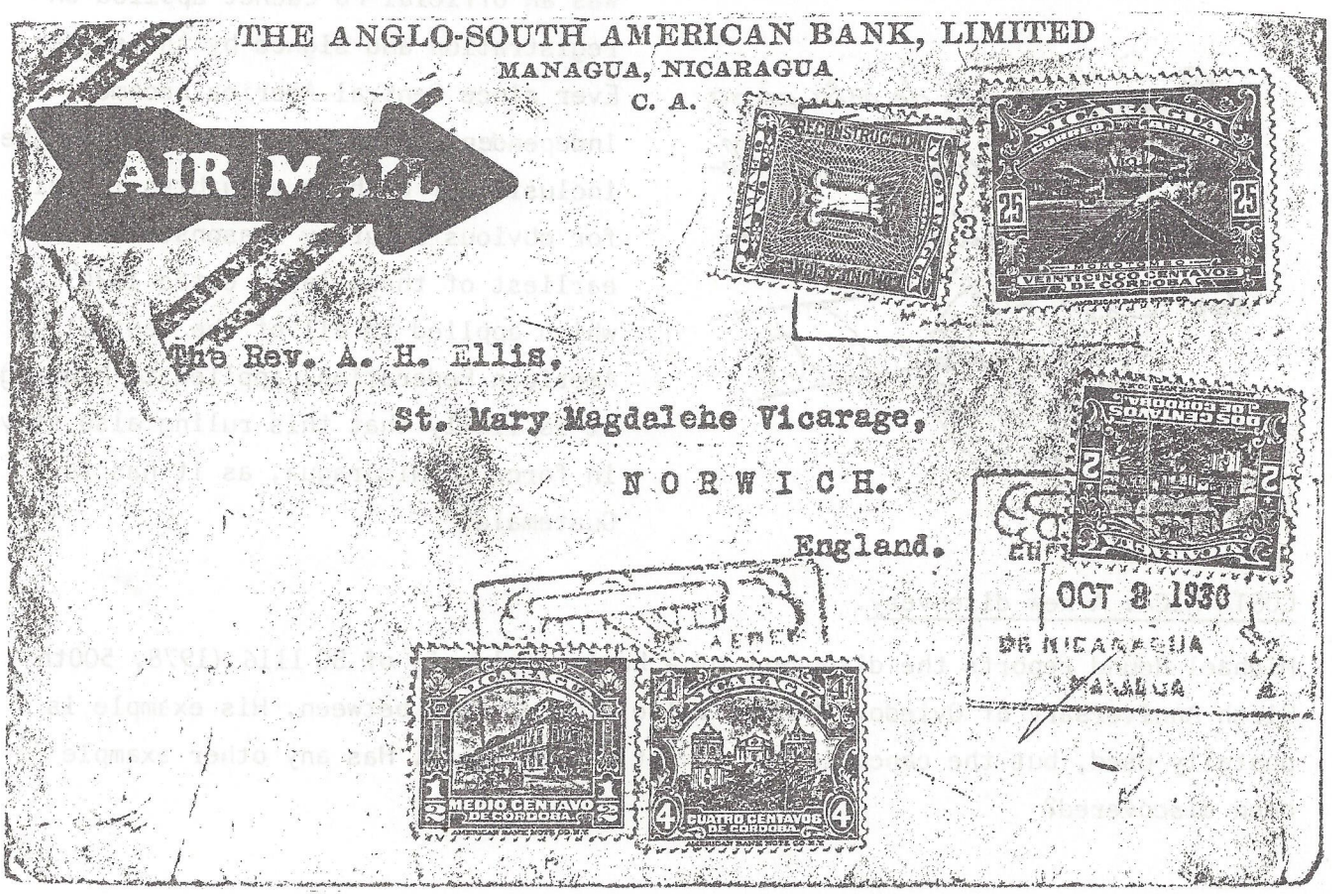
Margaret Sanderson.

Calle Kent 42, Hillburn,

New York, E. U. A.

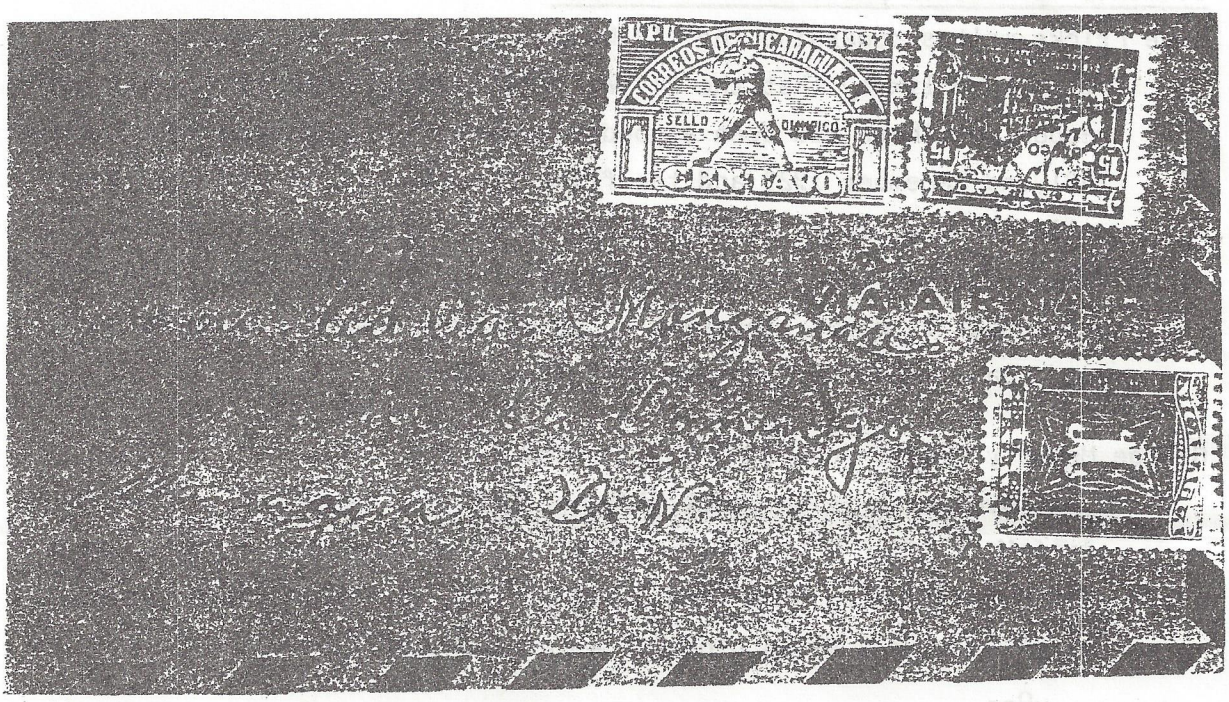
"Si Ud. nota algunas irregularidades en Comunicaciones, sírvase informar a la Dirección General"

Thirteen of the covers were addressed to Europe, which was exempted from the obligatory tax. However covers are found, addressed to Europe, with obligatory tax stamps affixed, but as part of the normal postal rate, and not to collect tax.



The cover to England, on the previous page, is dated October 30, 1930, and was correctly franked at 22½c (15c airmail plus 7½c postage) with a 1c obligatory tax stamp used as a definitive. This of course raises another question - why were obligatory tax stamps used on mail to Europe as ordinary definitive stamps?

In May 1937, four further obligatory tax stamps (SG 951-953a; Scott RA55-58) were issued to help fund the Central American games. In the case of four covers examined, the R de C and Olympic Tax stamps were used at the same time, as shown on the cover below.



This of course raised the internal rate by another 1 centavo and also the foreign rate. The last date I have for this double tax use in this particular batch of covers is March 1, 1938, and this use possibly continued on internal mail and mail to the USA until the R de C stamps were discontinued at an unknown date.

It should be noted that no covers using official stamps were included in the fifty-eight items and indeed the one or two official covers that I have seen during the period of use of the R de C tax stamps did not have the tax stamps added. This would suggest that official mail was exempt.

In some countries where obligatory tax stamps were issued, the authorities sometimes specified a period of use for the stamps. For the purpose of this article I have assumed that the R de C stamps were in use throughout the year and that no specific period of use was designated by the postal authorities.

This article is my interpretation of a number of covers that had R de C stamps added, and obviously there is further information to be had. Therefore if any reader has any knowledge of the existence of any decrees or official statements from the Nicaraguan postal authorities concerning the issue and use of these stamps or has

any further covers that advance the dates of use or show the date when they were discontinued, I would be pleased to hear from them.

Acknowledgements
Stanley Gibbons Catalogue, Part 15. Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue Vol. 3.
Notes of the Daft paper to the Royal Philatelic Society, November 1962.
Material received from and various discussions with Mr John Whiteside.
Nicaragua, by John L Stroub.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Comments on earlier parts of this article.

Gene Fricks writes regarding the "T" handstamp illustrated on page 163:-

> "It is more likely that the "T" was added because the bisect was not recognised.There had been a goodly number of issues immediate between 1921 and December 1923 and the first issue may no longer have been valid for use. There is no indication of a shortage of postal tax stamps but had the item been a bisect from the 1923 issue, I might agree that it might represent a 'provisional usage'. There is no good reason to have used the 1921 issue."

George McCarty writes regarding R de C stamp N°13:-

> "This overprint is on Scott RA28 not RA27 and is SG 572, correctly described under N°14. Denis Kilner may have been referring to RA33 which is "Resello 1927" and on RA27. This is a rare stamp but does exist. I have a VF og block of 4 in stock for $100."†

and stamp N°25:-

> "He also mentioned never having seen RA47. This is an even rarer stamp but exists on cover as I had one that I sold a few years ago. I have also had a used example and currently have a F-VF og mint copy, also $100."†

COSTA RICA: AN UNKNOWN LABEL

George McCarty confirms Hector Mena's comments and adds:-

> "(Following the Waterlow printing) they were printed locally and continued in use into the 80's. I remember using the local one. Unfortunately they were not saved and mint ones are now rare. I have the 1 and 5 colon ABNCo and 1 Colon Waterlow used for $3 plus $1 postage if that is all that is ordered. I have two sets."†

†George McCarty, Apartado 6737, San Jose, Costa Rica.

THE REVENUE STAMPS OF NICARAGUA

Continued from page 167. Comments on this tentative listing are invited.

(k) Consular Taxes

c1927. Engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Company. Perf 12. Size 21·5 x 31·5mm.

CT 1 50c red and black
CT 2 1Cor orange brown and black
CT 3 2Cor purple and black
CT 4 3Cor green and black
CT 5 5Cor orange and black
CT 6 10Cor blue and red
CT 7 50Cor black and red

19--. CT1-7 overprinted "Clase A" in red.

CT 8 50c red and black
CT 9 1Cor orange brown and black
CT10 2Cor purple and black
CT11 3Cor green and black
CT12 5Cor orange and black
CT13 10Cor blue and red
CT14 50Cor black and red

CLASE A

c1934. CT1-7 overprinted "CLASE A".

Overprinted in black.	Overprinted in red.
CT15 50c	CT22 50c
CT16 1Cor	CT23 1Cor
CT17 2Cor	CT24 2Cor
CT18 3Cor	CT25 3Cor
CT19 5Cor	CT26 5Cor
CT20 10Cor	CT27 10Cor
CT21 50Cor	CT28 50Cor

19--. CT1-7 overprinted "Clase B" in red.

CT29 50c red and black
CT30 1Cor orange brown and black
CT31 2Cor purple and black
CT32 3Cor green and black
CT33 5Cor orange and black
CT34 10Cor blue and red
CT35 50Cor black and red

CLASE B

c1934. CT1-7 overprinted "CLASE B".

Overprinted in black.	Overprinted in red.
CT36 50c	CT43 50c
CT37 1Cor	CT44 1Cor
CT38 2Cor	CT45 2Cor
CT39 3Cor	CT46 3Cor
CT40 5Cor	CT47 5Cor
CT41 10Cor	CT48 10Cor
CT42 50Cor	CT49 50Cor

R
Clase A

19--. CT1-7 overprinted "R/Clase A" in two lines in red.

CT50	50c	red and black
CT51	1Cor	orange brown and black
CT52	2Cor	purple and black
CT53	3Cor	green and black
CT54	5Cor	orange and black
CT55	10Cor	blue and red
CT56	50Cor	black and red

1950? Engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Company. Perf 12. Size 20·5 x 31·5mm.

CT57	50c	blue
CT58	1Cor	yellow
CT59	2Cor	green
CT60	5Cor	orange
CT61	10Cor	violet

(The ABNCo specimens include 1Cor grey, 3Cor red, 50Cor brown and 100Cor deep magenta)

19--. Engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Company. Perf 12. Size 25 x 33mm.

CT62 10c rose

(l) Railroad Coupons

c1890. Engraved and printed by Waterlow & Sons Ltd. Perf 14-15. Size 20 x 24mm. Sheet size unknown but these stamps are always found in blocks of 20 without sheet margins, as a maximum.

RT 1 1st reddish orange
RT 2 2nd blue

It is not known what the original purpose of these stamps was, but it has been suggested that they may have been intended for affixing to railway tickets to denote the class of fare paid.

Date? RT1-2 overprinted on the reverse side in a red circle, 14·5mm diameter "TESORIA GENERAL/ REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA" and Nicaraguan coat-of-arms.

RT 3 1st reddish orange
a overprint in violet
RT 4 2nd blue

(m) Military tax

No illustration available.

Postage stamp of 1900 surcharged "Militar/Vale $50".

MT 1 50P on 3c green (Scott 123, SG 139)
a inverted overprint
b second "i" inverted

(n) Wines and Spirits

1960 onwards.

Stamps unseen by me.

No illustrations available.

W 1 40c green and black (19 x 124mm) 1960.
W 2 0.05c pale olive and black (11 x 91mm)
W 3 0.75c orange and black (11 x 92mm)
W 4 2.00C red and black (11 x 92mm)

to be continued

Comments: from George McCarty, Costa Rica.

"S29-38 are actually postage stamps. They were given to retired members of the Guardia Nacional (G.N.) as an extra benefit of their pensions. They were entitled to use them to mail a letter. I do not know all the exact details but I have had a couple of covers and several postally used singles which I have sold. Mint, used and covers are all very rare. Jose Cuadra in Managua told me of the details. These comments would presumable apply to S28 also, since it is also inscribed 'G.N.'."

From Clyde Maxwell, CA, add:-

Imprenta Nacional, Managua. Rouletted.

S39 5c bugler (colour unknown)

SPANISH MAIN Annual subscription £6 (Europe), US$16 (elsewhere). The subscription includes four copies of Mainsheet, and also private treaty lists and auction catalogues.

Secretary: Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ.

The society also runs two specialised groups, the Central American and the Chile groups. The subscription to each group is £5 (Europe) US$12 (elsewhere). The subscription includes four copies of the respective Newsletter.

Publisher: Michael P Birks, Flixton Girls' School, URMSTON, Manchester M31 3DR.

NICARAGUA: POSTAL STATIONERY

by WAYNE MENUZ

In the newsletter of July 1990 was an article by Derek Pocock dealing with the Asenjo postal stationery of 1900. In it, he questioned the existence of the 5c and 10c wrappers Higgins and Gage E29 & 30.

He speculated that perhaps the listing in the Ascher catalogue was incorrect and that H & G merely copied it. I have a mint copy of each of these wrappers and they are illustrated here. Illustrated also is an example of the 5c envelope in the 230 x 100mm size which is unlisted in the H & G catalogue and would be numbered B45a.

Dr Pocock did not mention whether he has actually seen copies of B49a and B50a being the 30c and 50c envelopes in the 230 x 100mm size. I am unaware of anyone who has actually seen or owns one.